Chair: Adrian Mota, Associate Vice President, Research Programs

1. **Government of Canada COVID-19 Support Programs**

Canada Research Continuity Emergency Fund
- The Canada Research Continuity Emergency Fund website has been launched. The website provides information on the Government's $450M investment to help support the research community weather the impacts of COVID-19.
- The Canada Research Continuity Emergency Fund (CRCEF) was announced on May 15, 2020, as part of the Government of Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan. The temporary program has been established to help sustain the research enterprise at Canadian universities and health research institutions that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- CRCEF is a Tri-Agency program that is administered by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) on behalf of the three federal research funding agencies: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).
- The program originally included three funding stages.
- The first two stages will exclusively provide wage support for eligible research personnel. The third stage will support incurred costs associated with maintenance and ramp-up of research activities. For all stages, applicants will be required to demonstrate a need to access the emergency funds.
- Payments of $16 million were made to 11 institutions who applied to Stage 2.
- Stage 3 ($125 million) was launched on September 4, 2020.
  - This stage supports direct costs of research that have been incurred to:
    - Maintain essential research-related commitments during the COVID-19 pandemic and;
    - Support ramping-up to full research activities as physical distancing measures are eased and research activities resume.
  - Only direct costs of research that are extraordinary and incremental to those covered by existing sources of funds and have been incurred between March 15 and November 15, 2020, will be reimbursed, at up to 75%.
    - Extraordinary incremental costs incurred for research projects funded by either governmental or non-governmental sources are eligible for Stage 3 support. Extraordinary incremental costs are defined as unanticipated additional costs that would not normally have been incurred in the absence of the COVID-19 pandemic and cannot be funded by existing sources of funds
  - The team is currently working on developing frequently asked questions (FAQs) to clarify program expectations and questions raised by the research community.
  - The maximum eligibility period for the wage subsidy has been increased from 12 to 24 weeks. This will provide up to $84 million in extended support for research personnel affected by the COVID-19 pandemic at universities and health research institutions. This increase will be delivered in Stage 4 of the program.
    - More information about the recently announced Stage 4 will be shared when available. Please keep an eye on the CRCEF webpage for updates.
- If you have questions about the application process, please contact crcef-fucrc@chairs-chaires.gc.ca.

Support for Research Trainees
Each funding agency led the work to deliver the government support packages for their trainees and research support personnel.

Direct Support
- The direct support funding envelope provided support to trainees funded directly through CIHR. The trainees who were eligible for this support included:
    o All award holders of programs covered by the [Tri-Agency Research Training Award Holder's Guide](#) that expired between March and August 2020.
- These trainees were eligible for a four-month extension.
- There was a total of 951 eligible awards.
- CIHR-specific programs provided $3,366,338 to trainees.
- The Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship/ Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship programs provided the following support to trainees:
    o CIHR: $724,173
    o NSERC: $656,675
    o SSHRC: $833,346
- All Authorizations for Funding (AFF) were sent at the end of July 2020.
- All institutions received updated lists, including extension amounts, in early September 2020.

Indirect support
- The indirect support funding envelope provided top-up funds to grant recipients who continued to pay stipends and salaries while work was interrupted due to the pandemic between April 1 and June 30, 2020.
- Grantees needed to attest to their eligibility to receive these funds.
- There was a 97% response rate from grantees.
    o There were 115 individuals who did not provide a response. The window to receive this funding has now closed.
- The amounts provided were determined by calculating the three-month average annual grant amount that was spent on trainees and research support personnel.
- The total investment was $79,298,332.
- Institutions received their list of individuals with supplement amounts in mid-September 2020.
- All AFFs were sent by September 25 and CIHR released funds on September 25.

Questions from members
- Are financial reporting instructions and how to confirm costs incurred being sent to financial representatives at institutions?
    o CIHR confirmed that financial reporting will remain status quo; all standard CIHR financial reporting mechanisms continue to apply.
- Are the funds provided thought the support for students, trainees and research support personnel eligible for the Research Support Funds (RSF)?
    o CIHR explained that this determination has not been made yet.

2. **CIHR Updates**

Strategic Funding Opportunities
- This spring, CIHR announced a temporary pause on most strategic funding opportunities so that it could redeploy resources to deliver a rapid research response to COVID-19 and ensure the delivery of the Project Grant competition.
- CIHR knows that many researchers look to our strategic funding competitions for support, and that this disruption has affected your work. CIHR is pleased to report that we are now ready to start resuming the strategic competitions.

- CIHR will first resume the 12 competitions that had already been launched and were put on hold when the pandemic struck. CIHR will be emailing applicants who had started an application in the system to provide them with key details. Applicants will be able to:
    - o work on a previously started application(s);
    - o review and edit their previously submitted application(s) prior to resubmitting;
    - o withdraw their previously submitted application(s); and
    - o start a new application(s).
- Over the next year, new opportunities will be brought online in a staggered fashion.
- Competition timelines will be confirmed and updated on ResearchNet, and applicants will be provided with at least two months' advance notice to allow them to prepare their applications.

Spring 2020 Competition Results
- The Spring 2020 Project Grant competition results were released on September 15. The competition has approved 336 research grants, plus an additional 9 bridge grants, for a total investment of approximately $253M.
- 16 priority announcement bridge grants were funded for a total amount of $1,460,000. Of these, two were granted as top-up awards.
- The 336 grants approved were awarded to 330 individual Nominated Principal Investigators (six NPIs were awarded two grants). Of the 336 grants, 82 were awarded to early career researchers, and 11 were awarded for Indigenous health research projects.
- The average grant size/duration is approximately $751,201 over 4.39 years.
- Additional information on the results of the Spring 2020 competition is available on the CIHR website: https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52145.html

Spring 2020 Lessons Learned
- Consultations and analysis of the lessons learned collected from the Spring 2020 remote peer-review meetings are still ongoing. Additional information will be shared with the UD Network at a future meeting.

Fall 2020 Project Grant competition

- The application deadline for the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition has been extended to October 15, 2020.
- 2,866 registrations were submitted to the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition.

Doubling of leave credits for early career researchers applying to the Project Grant competition
- Recently, CIHR announced a change in policy related to leave credits for early career researchers (ECR) applying to the Project Grant competition.
- Starting with the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition, eligible leaves will be credited at twice the amount of time taken when determining ECR status. For example, a researcher who, within the first five years of work, took five months for a parental leave would benefit from a 10-month credit, thus extending their ECR status.
- Only leaves taken during the first five years of work will be used towards determining ECR status.
- An applicant may not use leaves to return from mid-career researcher status to ECR status.
- This means that these ECRs will have a longer time during which they can benefit from CIHR programs and policies such as the Observer Program and the equalization process in the Project Grant competition.
- Eligible leave types include the bereavement, medical and parental categories found in the Canadian Common CV. Administrative, sabbatical and study leave do not qualify. The "other circumstances" category can be used, where necessary, provided an applicant explains how the leave impeded career progress in a manner beyond their control.
- This is in addition to the decision we announced in September to "pause the clock" for ECRs to account for the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Canadian Research and Development Classification
- On October 5, Statistics Canada published the new [Canadian Research and Development Classification (CRDC)](). Historically, the Tri-Agencies have used a number of different research classifications across their programs and agencies. With the CRDC, we will be moving towards a common approach to classifying research across research organizations and government departments.
- While CIHR is not in a position to immediately implement the CRDC in their legacy systems, they will be looking to bring it online as part of the TGMS.
- The future adoption of the CRDC will ultimately allow researchers and research to be identified more accurately, enable better identification of interdisciplinary research and reduce burden and confusion, especially for researchers applying to multiple agencies.
- CIHR appreciates all the members of the research community that participated in consultations on the development of the CRDC.
- Additional information about the CRDC is available on the Statistics Canada website.

Questions from members

- Will there be another opportunity for ECRs to apply to the Observer Program?
  - CIHR confirmed that they will offer an Observer Program for ECRs for the upcoming Fall 2020 Project Grant competition.

3. **Expanding the Eligibility to Apply for Grant Funds- Indigenous-Led Research**

- In 2016, CIHR's Governing Council approved CIHR's commitment to Indigenous health research (IHR), with the intention of enabling research by and with Indigenous Peoples, groups and organizations.
- Indigenous stakeholders identified that administrative barriers exist, including lack of Indigenous Peoples, groups and organizations who are eligible to apply for and administer agency funding.
- In November 2018, Governing Council endorsed an implementation plan outlining how CIHR intends to deliver on its commitments for IHR.
- Following this implementation, the Tri-Agency working group (WG) undertook a review of Tri-Agency terms and conditions (T&Cs).
- CIHR's T&C eligibility requirement was creating an administrative barrier for individuals associated with Indigenous organizations.
- To reduce these administrative barriers, CIHR updated the eligibility of the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition to include Indigenous organizations as Nominated Principal Applicants (NPAs). To be eligible, NPAs must be:
  - an individual affiliated with an Indigenous non-governmental organization in Canada with a research and/or knowledge translation mandate; or,
  - an Indigenous non-governmental organization in Canada with a research and/or knowledge translation mandate.
- CIHR is looking to expand this eligibility to all of their programs.
- It is important to note that before grant funds can be issued to the NPA's organization, they must first be authorized by CIHR to administer grant funds. The agency will carry out a financial assessment and eligibility review, which may involve signing a funding agreement or other terms and conditions, at the agency's discretion. Alternatively, applicants may choose to have their funds administered by an eligible Canadian Institution.
- The Tri-Agency Working Group is currently working on expanding the eligibility to administer grant funds to Indigenous organizations by harmonizing and reducing the burden of the institutional eligibility process.
- Benefits of this policy change will include:
  - Reduced confusion/administrative burden for Indigenous researchers and increased access to federal funds for the Indigenous research community.

- o Individuals can now apply directly to funding opportunities based on their affiliation to an Indigenous non-governmental organization.

Questions from members

- Is there a predetermined definition of "Indigenous organization?"
  - o CIHR is currently using the definition included in the IHR commitment. The Fall 2020 Project Grant Funding Opportunity also includes links to this definition.

4. **Update on the Tri-Agency Grants Management Solution Initiative**

- The team behind the Tri-Agency Grants Management Solution (TGMS) initiative is continuing to advance its work to find a grants management solution that will better support applicants, reviewers and research administrators.
- Based on the results of the personas and journey mapping workshops that were held this past winter, TGMS now has a solid understanding of current major pain points, the desired future experience, and the desired outcomes of a new solution.
- With this information, TGMS has engaged with two potential vendors. .
- Based on discussions with these vendors, the TGMS team knows that their potential solutions could meet the needs of users.
- Before making any decisions, the TGMS team is seeking user feedback. Therefore, the next step is to ask each of the vendors to provide a Proof of Concept (PoC) that users will be able to use to assess level of fit.
- TGMS will be assessing the effectiveness and ease of use (whether it removes or minimizes a known pain point) of the potential solutions.
- A limited number of users from the research community will be able to test the PoC and provide an assessment.
- The final selection of the solution will be based on users' assessment, as well as cost and other key technical aspects.
- Once a solution is selected, a competitive process will be launched to find an industry partner that will support the implementation of the new solution.
- Upcoming activities include:
  - o **November: Change Readiness**
    - TGMS has begun to engage with internal and external stakeholders and users to gauge their readiness for the upcoming change.
    - The team is conducting virtual change readiness workshops and a change readiness survey.
    - The insights gained from these workshops and survey will help develop the change management strategy for the project phase.
  - o **November – December: CX Bio-profile (CV) ideation workshops**
    - The next step in client experience research is the Bio-profile workshops.
    - The TGMS team will be working with five institutions to hold virtual workshops to better understand the specific pain points of the current CV management process, data, and tools to ensure an improved experience in TGMS and develop a set of prioritized data needs for the development of prototypes to help inform the selection of a new solution.
- Ongoing engagements:
  - o External stakeholders will be included in the TGMS governance structure through the involvement of:
    - The **External Advisory Board (EAB)**, which will provide independent advice and, upon request, recommendations, to the TGMS Executive Board on specific subject areas. Members have been

selected through a nomination process. The EAB will be announced by November 2020 via the TGMS website.

  - ▪ The **External change agent network (ECAN)**, which has 119 members from across 113 eligible institutions across Canada. The members are predominately primary users who will collaborate and engage across their institutions to exchange knowledge, experiences and lead the change within the research community. On September 15, they met for the first time and piloted the external change readiness workshop. They will be helping to recruit participants for future change readiness workshops from within their institutions.

- Resources:
  - o An overview of the project and updates are available on the TGMS website.
  - o For more information about this initiative, please contact the TGMS team at tgms-sgsto@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

Questions from members:

- Is the TGMS envisioned only for the Tri-Agency?
  - o The TGMS will only be used by the Tri-Agencies at the beginning. However, the Tri-Agencies will keep in mind that this tool could be beneficial to other organizations.
- What is the budget for the TGMS?
  - o It was explained that the discovery phase will assist in determining the budget for the project.

5. Questions and Answers

Questions from members:

- Are there any updates related to the timelines for the CIHR Strategic Plan?
  - o The CIHR Strategic Plan will be published in January 2021.
- One member recommended that CIHR organize a discussion with the UD network on the Strategic Plan before it is released. CIHR committed to getting back to the network on this suggestion.

6. Adjournment
  - The meeting ended at 13:30. The next meeting of the University Delegates Network will be held on November 5, 2020.